**MONDAY DECEMBER 26 – OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS [A]**

**SAINT STEPHEN – PROTOMARTYR OF CHRIST**

**When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**

**Jesus is the Teacher who does not deceive his disciples. He promises them two things: the eternal beatitude in his heaven, if they remain faithful to the mission that He has entrusted on them. On earth, each of them will go from persecution to persecution, with no interruption. Jesus has been hated by the world. All his disciples will all be hated by the world. What disciples are hated by the world? Those who live the true Word of Christ Jesus, obeying each of his command. The one who does not live the Gospel and does not obey every commandment of Jesus the Lord is appreciated by the world, for the world loves what belongs to it. How far does the hatred of the world go? Into thinking that the killing of a disciple of Jesus the Lord is true worship to God: "I have told you this so that you may not fall away. They will expel you from the synagogues; in fact, the hour is coming when everyone who kills you will think he is offering worship to God. They will do this because they have not known either the Father or me. I have told you this so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you. "I did not tell you this from the beginning, because I was with you.” (Jn 16,1-4). Only the one who lives the Gospel without neglecting any precept, not even little, of the Law of Christ, will respect the one who believes in Christ Jesus, lives in Christ Jesus, with Christ, through Christ, obeying each of his command. The one who does not observe the Gospel must be considered as one who does not believe in Christ Jesus, he will also think of worshipping to God harming the true disciples of Jesus.**

**Here is how this truth comes to us from the Holy Spirit through the mouth of the Evangelist Luke: "Before all this happens, however, they will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.” (Lk 21,12-19) Has the Apostle Paul suffered from a persecution to another one? No suffering has been spared to him: “To my shame I say that we were too weak! But what anyone dares to boast of (I am speaking in foolishness) I also dare. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I am talking like an insane person.) I am still more, with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, far worse beatings, and numerous brushes with death. Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I passed a night and a day on the deep; on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own race, dangers from Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights, through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure. And apart from these things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is led to sin, and I am not indignant? If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows, he who is blessed forever, that I do not lie. At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus, in order to seize me, but I was lowered in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.” (2Cor 11,21-33). But he rejoices every suffering. Suffering makes him a perfect instrument in Christ for the redemption.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 10,17-22**

**But beware of people, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans.** **When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.**

**It is truth. The hatred of the world will always fall against the disciples of Jesus. But against whom will it fall? Against those disciples who live and keep the true Gospel of Christ Jesus in their heart. How will this hatred triumph over the true disciples of Jesus? It will triumph by using the accusations that do not find any evidence in history. With Jesus the accusation find false nourishment of truth in the wicked, rather terrible reading of history. Jesus has never said that he would have destroyed the temple. He has said instead: “Destroy this temple and I will raise it up in three days.” Jesus has driven out the uncleansed spirits with the finger of God. What did the scribes and the Pharisees? That He drove out demons with the help of Beelzebub. Jesus has never turned against Caesar. Instead, He said to give God what is of God and to Caesar what is of Caesar. Evilness can distort everything and one distorts today and one distorts tomorrow, it manages to convince everyone who is deprives of grace and of Holy Spirit. The condemnation to death is assured. The evildoer is allied with the evildoer, and it is the end of the disciple of Jesus. Mother of God, help the one who suffer from evilness.**